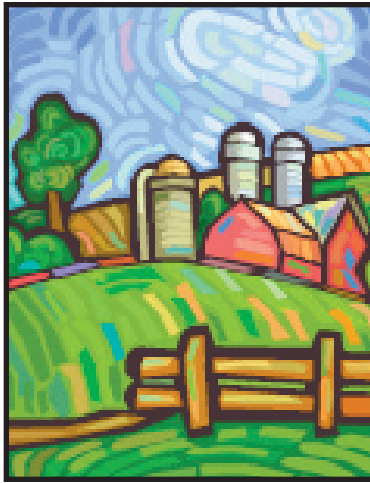


CULTIVATING SUCCESS in 2005

Starting an agricultural business can be difficult for new and aspiring farmers in the Puget Sound area. Good farmland is hard to come by and finding effective ways to market agricultural products can be challenging. Experienced farmers often deal with similar pressures. WSU King County Extension is addressing these concerns and providing help to both aspiring and existing farmers through Cultivating Success, a three-part course series developed by WSU, University of Idaho and the nonprofit, Rural Roots.



Cultivating Success courses emphasize the practical skills that farmers need to succeed. Combining the vast expertise of county extension, land grant faculty, and local farmer experts, these classes cover the development of practical farming knowledge in the areas of whole farm planning, resource stewardship, livestock and crop production strategies, finance, marketing, and business entrepreneurship. A parallel program for immigrant communities consisting of workshops and courses is also being developed.

Tilling the Soil of Opportunity

In January of 2005, WSU King County Extension offered a course on business planning and agricultural entrepreneurship called *Tilling the Soil of Opportunity*. Seventeen people involved in a wide variety of farm enterprises including goat dairies, lavender farms, Community Supported Agriculture operations, and horse stables enrolled in the course.

Students benefitted from various farm visits and workshops as well as weekly class sessions where local farmers, lawyers, and agency officials gave presentations on topics relating to business planning. The goal of the course was for each student to complete a business plan, and by the graduation ceremony, 12 students had done so.



Students learn about soil from farmer Erick Haakenson

Photo: Hannah Cavendish-Palmer

Cultivating Success with Immigrant Farmers

King County is home to a large community of Hmong farmers who face additional language and cultural barriers when it comes to making their agricultural enterprises successful. Consequently, WSU King County Extension staff have worked to adapt and compile curriculum from courses in the Cultivating Success series for Hmong farmers.

This work resulted in a whole-farm planning packet, which was shared with Hmong farmers at a series of interactive workshops combined with on-farm learning experiences and one-on-one farm visits. **More than 100 Hmong farmers attended 7 workshops encompassing more than 20 hours of instruction.** A course on Integrated Pest Management was also offered to Hmong farmers, which included 45 hours of class time.



Hmong Farmers Learn About Marketing Techniques

Photo: Todd Murray

Cultivating Agricultural Entrepreneurship

Cultivating Success Extends Beyond King County

In addition to the programming in King County, Cultivating Success courses were also offered in Clallam, Jefferson, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, made possible by a grant collaboration between King County Extension and WSU's Small Farm Program. More than 209 new and transitional farmers have enrolled in courses about farm and business planning in these counties since 2003, when this program began. Over 90% of the students that returned evaluations for these courses stated that they significantly improved their knowledge of farm planning.

Another Cultivating Success program outside of King County is located in Yakima and Wenatchee, where the curriculum is being adapted for Latino farmers. In addition to translating existing course materials into Spanish, WSU Extension staff have developed a series of radio broadcasts, hands-on farm based workshops, and one-on-one counseling sessions to help farmers develop individualized business plans.



Students receive recognition from farmer Wade Bennett at the Business Planning Class Graduation Ceremony.

Photo: Hannah Cavendish-Palmer

"I've learned so much in this Cultivating Success course and I know my farm operation will reap the benefits."

"The enthusiasm of my classmates was inspiring. It's good to know that many people are out there farming successfully."

"This class was definitely useful. There were a lot of good tools, information, and resources that I will be able to put to use."

"I enjoyed all of the networking possibilities during the Cultivating Success classes- both with fellow students and the farmers that presented to the class."

-- Comments From Course Participants

Partnerships

The continual success of the Cultivating Success program is due to the many partnerships and sponsors that have supported its initiation and implementation. Curriculum for the three-part course series was developed by Washington State University Extension, University of Idaho Extension, and Rural Roots, a non-profit food and farming organization. Funding for the program comes from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, USDA Risk Management Agency, USDA Higher Education Challenge Grants, and USDA Western Center for Risk Management Education. WSU faculty and staff around the northwest continue supporting this program in order to assist small farmers.

*For more information on the
Cultivating Success course series visit
www.cultivatingsuccess.org
or call 206-205-3206*

Sylvia Kantor
Extension Educator
WSU King County Extension

Todd Murray
Extension Educator
WSU King County Extension



Todd Murray in Mr. Jasengnou's field at the Green Bridge Farm between Carnation and Duvall.

Photo: Charlie Chang